

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 10735

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ID

SUBJECT: MURTOPO COMMENTS ON SHOOTING INCIDENT INVOLVING HIS SON

REF: JAKARTA 10361

1. SUMMARY: ALI MURTOPO TOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE YESTERDAY THAT THE AUGUST 5 SHOOTING INCIDENT IN WHICH HIS SON ALLEGEDLY KILLED A FELLOW HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT SHOULD BE ADJUDICATED IN THE COURTS, WITHOUT INTERFERENCE FROM ANYONE. TO AVOID INFLUENCING COURT PROCEEDINGS, MURTOPO DECLINED TO DISCUSS THE INCIDENT IN DETAIL. HE ACCEPTED RESPONSIBILITY FOR HIS SON'S ACTION "AS A FATHER AND AS A CITIZEN", BUT DENIED SEEING ANY CONNECTION BETWEEN THE SHOOTING AND HIS MILITARY POSITION, AND DID NOT COMMENT ON THE SUGGESTION PUBLICLY MADE BY SOME THAT HE SHOULD RESIGN FROM THE ARMY BECAUSE OF THE INCIDENT. END SUMMARY.

2. THREE DAYS AFTER HIS RETURN TO INDONESIA FROM MEDICAL TREATMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, LT. GEN. ALI MURTOPO ARRANGED A PRESS CONFERENCE TO DISCUSS, AMONG OTHER SUBJECTS, THE AUGUST 5 SHOOTING INCIDENT IN WHICH HIS SON ALLEGEDLY
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KILLED A FELLOW HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT. THERE ARE CONFLICTING ACCOUNTS OF THE INCIDENT, AND THE DEGREE OF ACTUAL CULPABILITY OF MURTOPO'S SON AND WHERE HE GOT THE GUN HE USED ARE UNCLEAR. SOME ANTI-MURTOPO ELEMENTS HAVE PUBLICLY SUGGESTED THAT MURTOPO RESIGN FROM THE ARMY, HOWEVER, AS AN INDONESIAN ADMIRAL DID FOLLOWING SIMILAR INCIDENT LAST YEAR.

3. IN BOTH A PREPARED STATEMENT AND FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS, MURTOPO EMPHASIZED AGAIN AND AGAIN HIS WILLINGNESS TO PERMIT THE "RULE OF LAW" AND THE "PROCESS OF THE COURTS" TO DECIDE HIS SON'S FATE, WITHOUT OUTSIDE INFLUENCE OR INTERFERENCE FROM ANY PARTY. MURTOPO REFUSED, HOWEVER, TO CLARIFY, DISCUSS, GIVE EXPLANATIONS OR ANSWER QUESTIONS" ABOUT THE DETAILS OF THE SHOOTING INCIDENT, ON THE GROUNDS THAT HIS COMMENTS MIGHT INFLUENCE THE EXAMINATION AND POSSIBLE TRIAL OF HIS SON.

4. MURTOPO ADMITED HIS "EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT AND HIS RESPONSIBILITY AS A FATHER AND A CITIZEN" FOR HIS SON'S ACT. IN RESPONSE TO A REPORTER'S QUESTION, HOWEVER, MURTOPO DENIED SEEING ANY CONNECTION BETWEEN THE INCIDENT AND HIS MILITARY POSITION, AND NEITHER REFERRED TO NOR COMMENTED ON THE SPECIFIC SUGGESTION THAT HE RESIGN.

5. ACCORDING TO MURTOPO, HIS SON IS IN AN ARMY HOSPITAL AND HAS NOT YET BEEN FORMALLY ARRESTED, BECAUSE "SERIOUS INJURIES" HE SUFFERED IN THE INCIDENT PRECLUDE HIS INTERROGATION. MURTOPO HAS CALLED ON THE FAMILY OF THE VICTIM, EXPRESSED HIS SYMPATHY AND "INVITED THEM NOT TO COMPLICATE" THE ADJUDICATION OF THE CASE BY ISSUING PREJUDICIAL STATEMENTS (THE BROTHER OF THE VICTIM EARLIER HAD MADE AN EMOTIONAL APPEAL TO THE PRESS FOR "JUSTICE").
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6. ALSO DENIED RUMORS THAT HIS WIFE, IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE SHOOTING, HAD CALLED A NUMBER OF JAKARTA NEWSPAPERS, TRYING TO PRESSURE THEM INTO SUPPRESSING THE NEWS. ACCORDING TO MURTOPO, HIS WIFE WAS WITH HIM IN THE US AT THE TIME.

7. MURTOPO ALSO DISCUSSED SEVERAL UNRELATED MATTERS IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE. HE WAS GENERALLY SANGUINE ABOUT HIS HEALTH AND THE CONDITION OF HIS EYES, SAYING HE WOULD BE BACK AT WORK AGAIN "AT FULL SPEED" AFTER A THREE MONTH RECUPERATION; DENIED ANY INVOLVEMENT IN A SCANDAL WHICH BROKE IN HIS ABSENCE CONCERNING THE OPERATION OF A "FUTURES TRADING COMMODITY MARKET," WITH WHICH HE WAS RUMORED TO BE LINKED; AND RATHER CURIOUSLY VOLUNTEERED AN ENDORSEMENT OF THE RE-ELECTION OF PRESIDENT SUHARTO, ON WHICH SUBJECT HE SAID HE HAD FREQUENTLY BEEN QUESTIONED RECENTLY.

8. COMMENT. MURTOPO, WHOSE POLITICAL FUTURE HAS BEEN CLOUDED BECAUSE OF QUESTIONS OVER HIS HEALTH AND THE IMPACT OF THE SHOOTING INCIDENT, NOT SURPRISINGLY SEEMS

DETERMINED TO HOLD ONTO HIS POWER. HE IS CRITICALLY
DEPENDENT ON THE PERSONAL SUPPORT OF THE PRESIDENT TO
MAINTAIN HIS POSITION, HOWEVER, AND HIS GRATUITOUS
ENDORSEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT'S RE-ELECTION MAY RAISE
QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STATE OF HIS RELATIONS WITH THE
PALACE.
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